THE WORLD.

NUMBER CXLI.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *September* the 11th, 1755.

THE following letter was miſlaid; which is the reaſon of it's not having appeared earlier in this paper. The excuſe, perhaps, is leſs pardonable than the fault; but it is the only one I can make with truth; and I hope the author will receive it with candour.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM,

SIR,

IF ever you take the trouble of looking into any of the public papers beſides your own, you cannot help obſerving the many curious experiments, which of late years have been made through all parts of this kingdom,

dom, in *running*, *riding*, *leaping*, *driving*, *fire-eating*, *wire-dancing*, and various other uſeful arts, by perſons of all ranks and fortunes.

I AM willing to give credit to theſe extraordinary atchievements, though many of them, I own, far exceed the bounds of probability, becauſe of the honour they do to our age and country: and it is not without high indignation againſt the ingratitude of the preſent times, that I have been hitherto diſappointed in my expectations of ſeeing public honours and rewards beſtowed on theſe illuſtrious perſonages, who by ſuch experiments have ſhewn us what great things the powers of nature are capable of, when properly directed. Newton was knighted, and both he and Mr. Locke had very conſiderable places under the government; and yet what mighty matters did theſe philoſophers do, in compariſon of our new experiment-makers? They contented themſelves with looking into the laws of nature, and went no farther. The mind orders it's ideas juſt as it uſed to do, before the *Eſſay on human underſtanding* had baniſhed from the world the doctrine of *innate principles*, and *ſubſtantial forms:* and Newton, after he had demoliſhed the vortices of Deſcartes, left the planets juſt as he found them. They have rolled round the ſun preciſely in the ſame time, and at the ſame diſtance, before and ſince his diſcoveries. But our wonder-workers have found the ſecret of controuling the laws of nature, and have actually accompliſhed what in the wards of Bedlam, and the laboratories of Logada, it would have been thought madneſs to attempt.

I AM ſenſible it may be objected to me, that the things I compare are totally different; and inſtead of theſe modern chiefs in philoſophy, I ſhould rather have turned

turned my eyes to the renowned heroes of antiquity, whoſe exploits have been the admiration of ſo many ages. Be it ſo. We own the reſemblance, and have no reaſon to be afraid of the compariſon: for beſides that many of theſe exploits are looked upon as fabulous, if it be conſidered that ſome of them were only the effects of brute force, and that the merit of others is to be divided amongſt multitudes, who all had a ſhare in their production; no doubt can be made, on a fair eſtimate between the merit of ancient and modern worthies, on whoſe ſide the ballance will be found to turn. I am no enemy to the fame of antiquity; but I own it grieves me, that when ancient exploits have been celebrated over and over by the choiceſt poets and hiſtorians, thoſe of our own times, no leſs extraordinary, ſhould be left to paſs down to poſterity, on no better authority than the doubtful teſtimony of a common news-paper.

Mr. Fitz-Adam, you profeſs yourſelf a citizen of the world, an equal judge between all the children of our firſt parents; act up then to this character, and do juſtice: ſuffer not exploits to drop into oblivion, at which the Gymnaſia of Greece and Italy would have ſtood aghaſt; which would have have been honoured with ſtatues and crowns of olive at Olympia; with a place in the Prytaneum at Athens, and an ovation, if not a triumph, at Rome. Suffer not ingratitude to fix a ſtain upon our country, which it never would be able to wipe off.

I pretend not to enumerate, or even to be ſenſible of all the advantages with which theſe ſingular efforts of genius will be attended: but in natural philoſophy and religion their uſes are apparent at the firſt glance.

Experiments,

EXPERIMENTS, it is now agreed on all hands, are the only ſolid baſis of natural ſcience. In theſe Bacon and Newton led the way; but their followers have enobled them; they have transferred them from *heavy inert matter*, to the very *quinteſſence of ſpirit*, their horſes and themſelves. What before was only fit for recluſe pedants, they have made the amuſement and the buſineſs of fine gentlemen.

AND here I beg leave, by the way, to propoſe a problem to the lovers of theſe noble arts, which I hope will not be thought altogether unworthy of their attention.

SUPPOSE a *gentleman* is able to drive a wheel-carriage any given number of miles in an hour, when the motion of his horſes is progreſſive, or according to the natural courſe of their limbs; how much time ought he to be allowed to do it in, when his horſes move retrograde, or tails foremoſt?

BUT to come to religion. Theſe new experiments ſerve to ſhew how little we underſtand of the bounds of credibility. Had ſuch experiments been properly attended to, a certain gentleman that ſhall be nameleſs, might have ſpared his haughty challenge to the defenders of the chriſtian faith. Our brave youths will ſoon make him ſenſible of his error, and turn the edge of that formidable broad ſword of his upon himſelf, with which he has threatened to depopulate the chriſtian world. Will he any longer pretend to ſay, that no teſtimony can make a thing credible that is contrary to experience, when I defy him to match, in the annals of any age or country, the feats which he is forced to believe on the credit of a common news-paper?

I could run through all the arts and ſciences, and in each of them ſhew the wonderful advantage of theſe new experiments: but this is a taſk that deſerves an abler hand: I therefore propoſe, when his Majeſty ſhall have encorporated the authors of them into a new Royal Society, which I hope will be ſoon, that one of our moſt eminent pens be appointed, after the example of biſhop Sprat, to write the hiſtory of the ſociety; and another, after the example of Fontenelle, to make eulogies on it's particular members. And I deſire that you will immediately look out for two ſuch perſons amongſt your correſpondents; which I ſhould imagine can be no great difficulty, to one who has the honour to reckon in that number the prime wits of the age.

I am,

SIR,

Your moſt humble ſervant.

MR. FITZ-ADAM,

WALKING the other day through Wapping, to ſee the humours of the place, I happened to caſt my eyes upon the window of an alehouſe, where I ſaw written in large capitals, ROMAN PURL. I had the curioſity to aſk of a man who was walking near me, why it might not as well have been called BRITISH PURL, as ROMAN PURL? "O, Sir, ſays he, the landlord has had twen-"ty times the cuſtom ſince he gave his liquor that out-"landiſh name." I ſoon found that my ſagacious informer was a maker of leather breeches, by ſeeing him enter, and ſet himſelf to work in a ſhop, over the door of which was written upon a bit of paper, *The* TRUE ITALIAN *leather-breeches balls, ſold here by the* MAKER. I confeſs I was a little ſurprized to find the faſhion of admiring every thing foreign had extended itſelf to ſo great